

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Platte River Power Authority (Platte River) is a public utility formed in 1966 to provide generation and transmission service to the communities of Fort Collins, Loveland, Longmont, and Estes Park. To improve the reliability of this service, Platte River proposes to upgrade and rebuild portions of the existing transmission lines in the vicinity of Fort Collins, Colorado and along an existing transmission line right-of-way north of the city to the Rawhide Energy Station (see **Figure 1-1**). A description of the Proposed Project, the purpose and need for action, the purpose and need for this Environmental Assessment (EA), and the public and agency involvement process for the Proposed Project are described in the following sections.

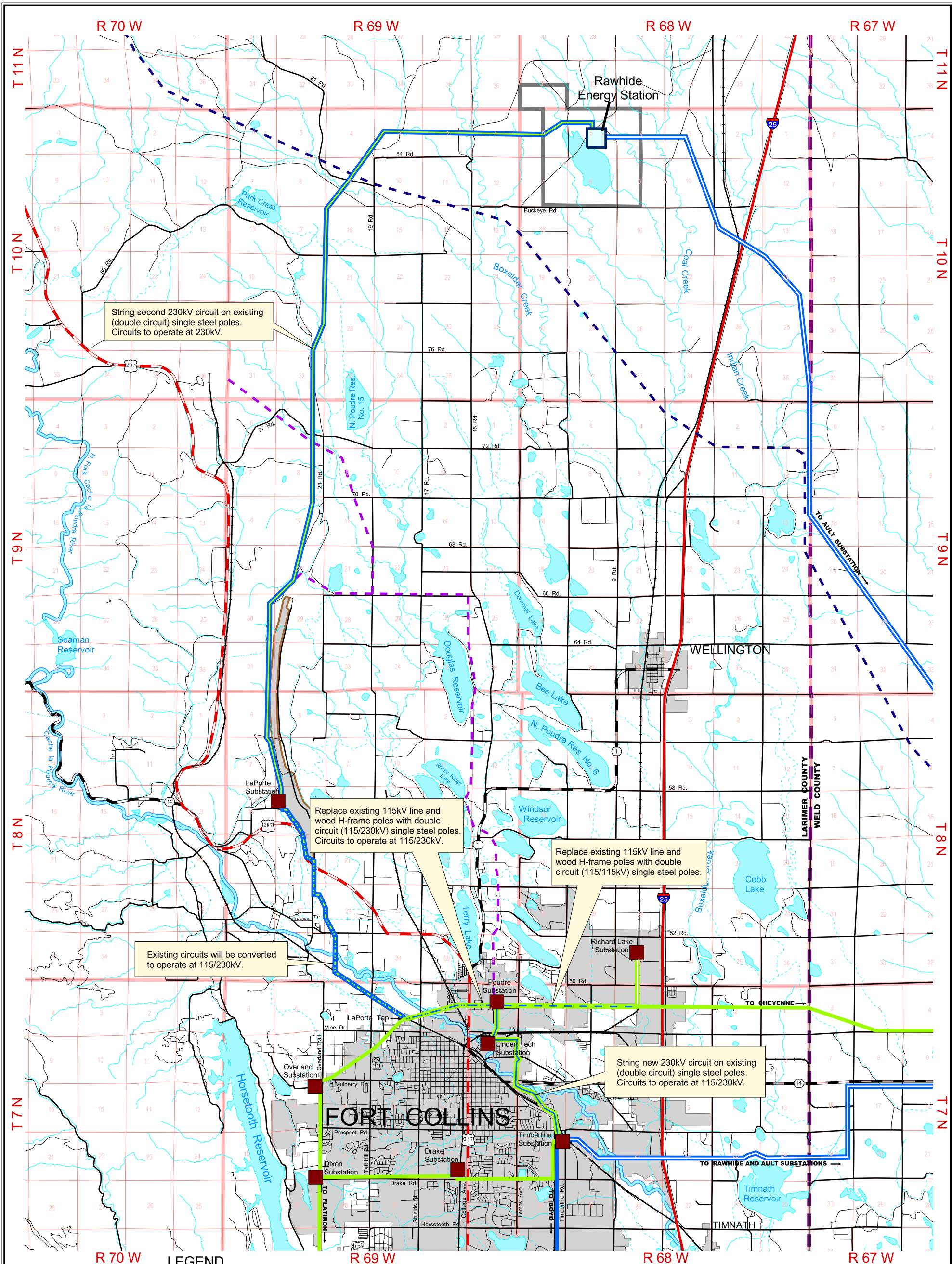
### 1.1 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Platte River is proposing to add additional generation at its Rawhide Energy Station, located approximately 18 miles north of Fort Collins, to serve increasing demands for electricity. In order to deliver the additional power generation to customers, the electric transmission system in the Fort Collins area needs to be upgraded. These upgrades require adding new wires to existing power poles or, in some areas, rebuilding the existing transmission line (see **Figure 1-1**). The proposed upgrades and rebuilds will be within the rights-of-way (ROW) of existing lines. The ROW width of the existing lines are 75-120 feet. The ROWs for the proposed lines will be 75-100 feet within the ROWs of the existing lines. Some of the transmission lines that need to be improved are owned by the U.S Department of Energy (DOE), Western Area Power Administration (Western). The Proposed Action and alternatives are described in additional detail in **Section 2.0**.

The Rawhide Energy Station is presently connected to the area transmission grid by three 230kV transmission lines owned by Platte River. Two of the transmission lines, strung on double-circuit poles, leave the Rawhide Energy Station in a southeasterly direction to Western's Ault Substation (**Figure 1-1**). One of these circuits terminates at the Ault Substation. The second circuit from the Rawhide Energy Station, along with a 230kV line from Ault, continues on double-circuit poles to Platte River's Timberline Substation in Fort Collins.

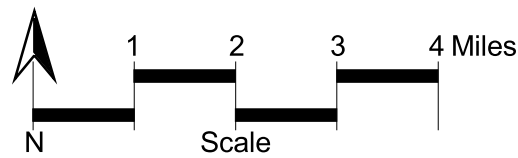
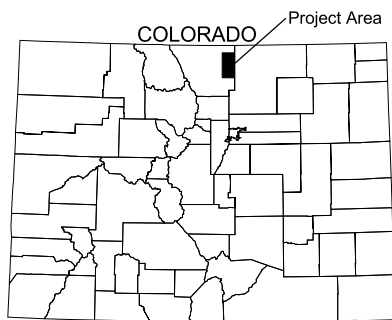
The third Platte River 230kV transmission line from the Rawhide Energy Station is routed to the southwest towards Platte River's LaPorte Substation. This single-circuit transmission line is constructed on double-circuit, single steel poles where one of the circuits is currently vacant. This existing 230kV line terminates at the LaPorte Substation in a 230/115kV step-down transformer. Platte River owns a double-circuit 115kV transmission line from the LaPorte Substation to the LaPorte Tap where the lines intersect Western's existing 115kV transmission line. One of these 115kV lines terminates at Platte River's Overland Trail Substation and the other terminates at Western's Poudre Substation.

Platte River's LaPorte Substation to LaPorte Tap double-circuit 115kV transmission line was designed and constructed for eventual operation at 230kV. Platte River's double-circuit line from its Timberline Substation to Western's Poudre Substation also was designed and constructed for operation at 230kV on one circuit and 115kV on the other circuit. Presently only the 115kV circuit is strung.



**LEGEND**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Rebuild Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115kV Double Circuit | US Interstate Highway                           |
| Upgrade Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115/230kV            | US Highway                                      |
| Rebuild Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115/230kV            | State Highway                                   |
| Convert Existing 115kV Double Circuit to 115/230kV            | Primary Road                                    |
| Upgrade Existing 230kV Single Circuit to 230kV Double Circuit | Secondary Road                                  |
| Existing 115kV Double Circuit                                 | Railroad  |
| Existing 230kV Double Circuit                                 | Cache la Poudre River                           |
| Existing 115kV Single Circuit                                 | Stream  |
| Existing 230kV Single Circuit                                 | Ditch or Canal                                  |
| Existing Substation   | Aqueduct  |
| Rawhide Energy Station  | Lake/Reservoir                                  |
| Rawhide Property Boundary                                     | Section Line                                    |
|   | County Line                                     |
|   | Township/Range                                  |
|   | Mine Boundary                                   |
|   | Municipality                                    |
|   | Rural Electrical Association Transmission Line  |
|   | Western Area Power Administration 345kV Circuit |



PLATTE RIVER POWER AUTHORITY  
FORT COLLINS TRANSMISSION LINE UPGRADE PROJECT

**Figure 1-1**  
**Project Area, Existing and Proposed Facilities**

## **1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

Western and Platte River (the project proponents) need to upgrade and rebuild portions of the transmission lines in the Project Area. The purpose of this upgrade is to improve reliability of electric service in the Fort Collins area, and to be able to deliver the additional power generation from the Rawhide Energy Station (see **Section 1.1**).

Regional growth in Larimer County has exceeded the forecasts made by the utilities that serve this area. Since 1991, the average number of residential customers has increased 25 percent and the number of commercial and industrial customers has increased more than 20 percent (Platte River, 1999). Growth in electricity demand is due to both new customers and from an increase in the use of electricity by existing customers.

To meet current and projected electric demands of Platte River's customers, additional power generation is needed from the Rawhide Energy Station. The transmission system in the Fort Collins area needs to be upgraded to deliver the additional power to distribution substations that serve Platte River's customers. The Proposed Project will allow Platte River to continue to provide reliable and economical electric power to its customers in Fort Collins, Loveland, Longmont and Estes Park.

## **1.3 PURPOSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

In accordance with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures (10 CFR Part 1021), the Proposed Project requires preparation of an EA. The purpose of this EA is to describe the potential impacts associated with the Proposed Project. This EA has been prepared to be consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing the procedural provisions of the NEPA (40 CFR 1500 -1508).

As Western is the lead federal agency for the Proposed Project, this document was prepared in accordance with the procedures required for DOE to comply with NEPA.

## **1.4 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

Public and agency involvement opportunities were incorporated into this process. In addition, consultation letters were provided to the appropriate regulatory and public agencies. The following public workshops were conducted to provide opportunities for public and agency input:

- February 1, 2001 Fort Collins, Colorado
- February 15, 2001 Fort Collins, Colorado

The objectives of these workshops were to meet NEPA requirements, to inform the public and agencies of the details of the Proposed Project, to present alternatives for the Proposed Project to the public, to identify issues of concern, and to determine the level of analysis necessary to

address the issues relevant to the Proposed Project alternatives.

Landowners adjacent to the existing rights-of-way (ROWs) for the transmission lines were notified of the public workshops. Informational materials (handouts) were provided to the public at the public workshops. Copies of the notice and informational materials provided to the public are included in **Appendix A**.

The primary issues identified by the public and agencies included the following:

- Visual impacts;
- Minimizing construction disturbances;
- Electric and magnetic fields (EMFs);
- Underground construction;
- Relocation of selected H-frame wood poles;
- Protection of wetland/riparian and wildlife habitat areas especially along the Cache la Poudre River; and
- Protection of native plants and sensitive species within the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas.